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ABSTRACT

This study assessed the quality of undergraduate education at the University of California-San Diego (UCSD) using student evaluations as the assessment tool. Educational quality was defined as good scores on the UCSD Course Appraisal and Professor Evaluation (CAPE) form. UCSD's CAPE is unique because students collect, compile, and make public the results of the evaluation. The study used data from student evaluations conducted each fall quarter from 1985 through 1988 which included over 93,000 responses from students in 1,700 undergraduate courses. Results found that: (1) students tended to rate humanities and fine arts classes with higher scores than science, math, or engineering classes; (2) students preferred small classes (less than 50) and very large classes (over 300) to medium-sized classes; (3) students rated their special interest classes higher than their general education and or major/minor classes; (4) students favored associate and assistant professors over full professors and they preferred lecturers the most of all (possibly because lecturers tended to teach "special interest classes" and full professors taught "difficult" classes); (5) the overwhelming majority of students favorably evaluated the quality of their undergraduate education; (6) 63.2 percent favorably rated their teaching assistants. Includes a copy of the CAPE evaluation form. (JB)

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University of California, San Diego

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Student Evaluations of Instructional Quality:
How Does UCSD Rate?

Darlene Morell
Randall Souviney

Nearly all major colleges and universities collect student evaluations of instructional quality. The purposes of these evaluations are variously to provide: (a) diagnostic feedback to faculty about the effectiveness of their teaching; (b) a measure of instructional quality for tenure/promotion decisions; and (c) information for students to use in the selection of courses and instructors (Marsh, 1984). Although the first purpose is nearly universal, the next two are not. At many universities, systematic student input is a required component of the merit and promotion process, whereas at others the inclusion of student evaluations is optional. Similarly, the results of student evaluations are published at some universities, whereas at others the results are considered confidential.

At the University of California at San Diego (UCSD), the quality of instruction has been monitored by students since 1973, the year in which a unique system of evaluation called the Course Appraisal and Professor Evaluation (CAPE) was launched. The CAPE operation is distinctive in that it is entirely managed and operated by students. Although receiving its operating budget from the Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, the responsibility for collecting, compiling and making public the results of the evaluation process lies with the student staff members of CAPE. While student run, CAPE serves three populations on campus. Foremost among these are the students who use the published information as a supplement to the course catalog in their selection of courses and instructors. CAPE also serves professors by providing them with diagnostic feedback regarding their teaching skills. And, finally, CAPE serves administrators by providing a measure of teaching effectiveness for use in tenure/promotion and merit salary decisions.

As at many institutions of higher education, UCSD has its share of critics of the student evaluation process. Critics argue that student evaluations reflect popularity and

other factors unrelated to learning and teaching excellence. Proponents, on the other hand, contend that, as consumers of instruction, students are the best qualified to evaluate the product being offered (Rodin & Rodin, 1972). It is the consumer analogy that provides the strongest defense for defining teaching effectiveness in terms of good scores on evaluation forms. That is, even when responding to questions on a computer-read form, students are reporting honestly their perceptions of the instructional process - provided the questions asked of them are specific and clear. Every judgment about teaching performance based on student evaluations must take this fundamental fact into account. Perceptions are not necessarily accurate representations of the objective facts, but they nevertheless constitute the perceived reality at the student end of the teaching process. For this reason their importance in gauging the caliber of the educational "product" should not be undervalued.

The purpose of the current study is to assess the quality of undergraduate education at UCSD using student evaluations as the assessment tool. Educational quality is defined here as good scores (i.e., positive responses) on the Course Appraisal and Professor Evaluation form.

METHOD

Computer generated data obtained from student evaluations conducted each fall quarter for four years[1] (1985-1988) were subjected to statistical analysis using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSSx). Over 93,000 responses from students in 1,700 undergraduate courses were included in the analysis. The data were averaged over four years to avoid ideosyncratic occurrences associated with one set of ratings.

Instrument

The CAPE questionnaire contains several instructor and course specific items and two global recommendation questions; i.e., (1) *Do you recommend this course overall?*, and

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[1]*Starting in the seventh week of instruction, CAPE questionnaires are administered to all undergraduate classes with enrollments of 15 or more. Smaller classes are included in the evaluation process by professor request.*

(2) *Do you recommend this instructor for this course?* Students respond to the instructor and course specific statements by agreeing or disagreeing with each statement using a five point Likert-type scale where 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neutral, 4=agree, and 5=strongly agree. The two global recommendation questions require a "yes" or "no" response. In addition to the evaluation questions, the CAPE contains questions regarding the student's reason for taking the course (e.g., major, minor, general education) and class level (i.e., freshman, sophomore, etc.). An example of the CAPE questionnaire appears in Appendix A.

Measures

Factor analysis performed on instructor and course specific items on the CAPE questionnaire clearly identified three separate factors, or measures, of educational quality at UCSD: Professor Skill, Course Quality, and TA Skill. The Professor Skill measure consists of items such as "Instructor displays proficient command of the material", "Instructor's speech is clear and audible". Coefficient alpha used to test the internal consistency of the Professor Skill measure was .87. The Course Quality scale consists of items such as "Course material is intellectually stimulating" and "The assignments promote learning". The reliability coefficient for the Course quality scale was .70. Finally, the TA Skill scale includes items such as "In general, TA(s) explain material in a manner that promotes learning". The reliability coefficient for the TA Skill scale was a strong .92.

Because the student evaluation literature suggests that student evaluations are influenced by academic course type (i.e., science, math, social science), class size, professor's rank, and the student's reason for taking the course (Marsh, 1984), these variables were included in the current study as possible correlates of educational quality. Professor's rank and class size were obtained from the published results of the CAPE evaluations and from archived data maintained in the Office of Admissions and Registrar (OAR). Academic course type and the student's reason for taking the course were obtained from students' responses to the CAPE questionnaire.

RESULTS

The first step of the analysis involved obtaining the distribution of responses according to course type, class size, student's reason for taking the course, and professor's rank for each of four academic years. These data appear in Table 1.

Table 1

Distribution of CAPE Responses by Course Type, Class Size, Reason, and Professor's Rank 1985 - 1988

Characteristics	1985	1986	1987	1988	Four Year Average
Course Type					
Hum/Fine Arts	20.0%	25.9%	24.7%	24.9%	23.9%
Social Sciences	27.8	29.4	30.5	32.7	30.1
Science/Math	39.4	35.4	35.5	31.7	35.5
Engineering	12.7	9.3	9.3	10.7	10.5
Class Size					
≤ 20	3.5%	4.1%	4.8%	3.9%	4.1%
21-50	10.5	12.5	14.5	11.1	12.5
51-100	17.1	15.2	15.7	16.7	16.2
101-200	30.2	27.3	29.4	30.5	29.3
201-300	22.9	20.2	19.7	21.4	21.1
> 300	15.8	20.7	16.0	16.5	17.2
Reason					
Major	56.4%	54.1%	55.9%	53.9%	55.1%
Minor	11.3	11.3	11.8	11.4	11.4
Gen. Education	20.8	23.0	21.9	24.8	22.6
Academic Interest	11.5	11.6	10.4	9.9	10.8
Professor's Rank					
Full	41.7%	43.1%	46.3%	42.5%	43.4%
Associate	26.8	25.4	22.2	17.1	22.9
Assistant	10.4	10.3	10.9	18.6	12.5
Lecturer	21.1	21.1	20.6	21.8	21.2

Course type. Until 1988, the largest percentage of fall enrollments occurred in science/math courses. In 1988, however, social science enrollments (32.7%) were slightly higher than those of science/math (31.7%). In decreasing order, the four-year average enrollment figures by course type are: science/math (35.5%), social science (30.1%), humanities/fine arts (23.9%), and engineering (10.5%). These figures are graphically displayed in Figure 1.

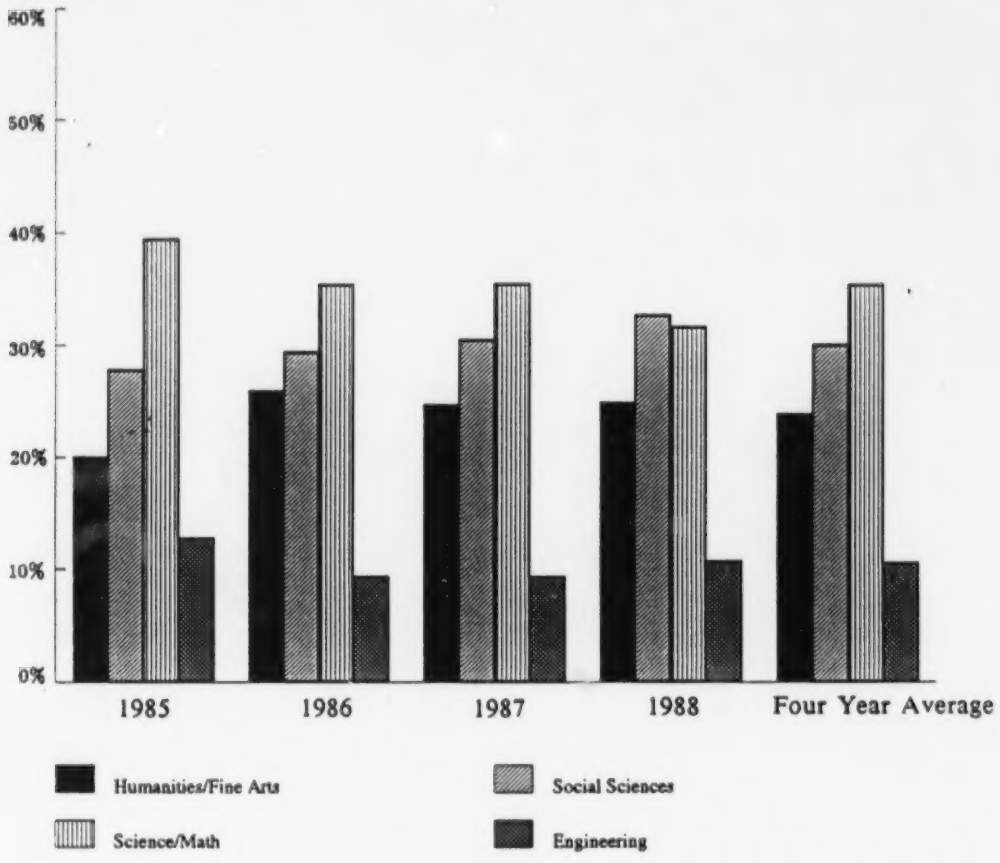

Figure 1: Distribution of fall enrollments by *course type*: 1985-1988

Class size. Class sizes of 100 to 300 are the most common at UCSD (see Figure 2). Over 50% of the respondents in a given fall quarter are enrolled in classes ranging in size from 101-300. Class sizes of over 300 are also relatively common. On the other hand, class sizes of 20 or less are rare. Humanities/fine arts classes (e.g., Spanish Literature, Music) are typically offered in small classrooms with attendance of 20 or fewer.

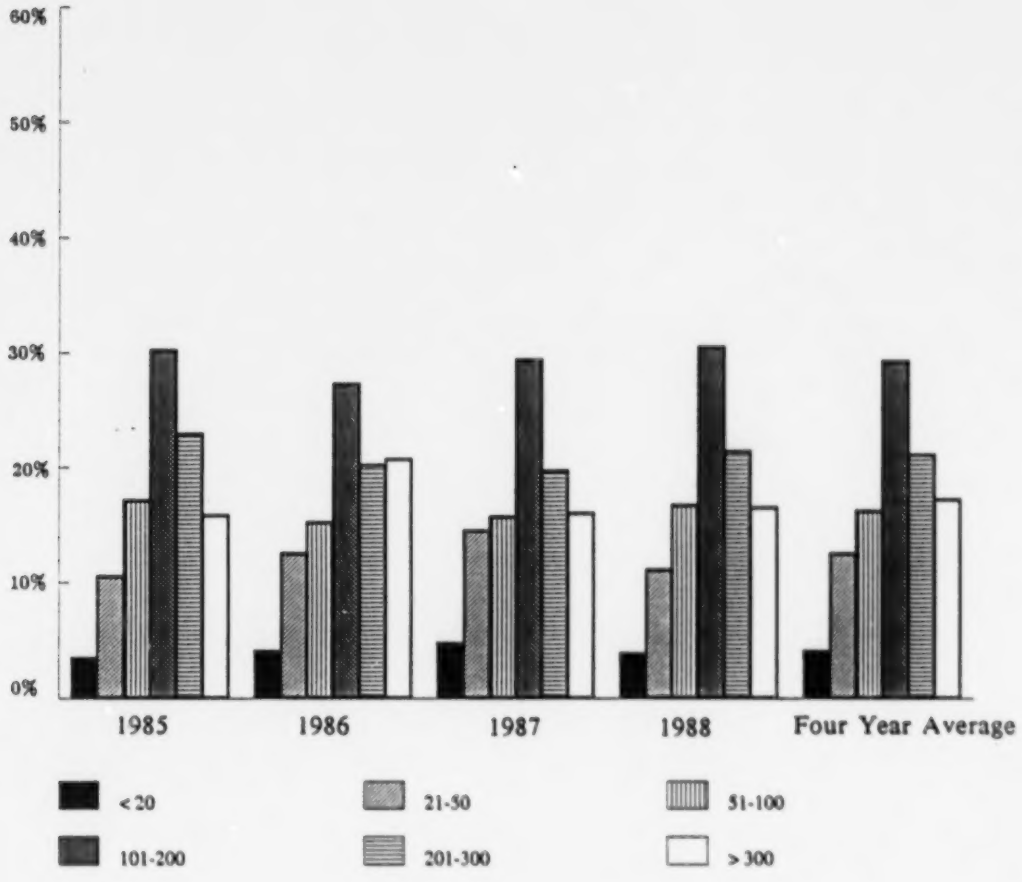

Figure 2: Distribution of CAPE responses by *class size*: 1985-1988

Reason for taking class. As might be expected, the most common reason given for taking a class is that the class satisfies a major requirement. The second most common reason for taking a class is that it meets the student's general education requirements. On average, 10.8% of the students report that they take classes because of special interest in the topic. Students' reasons for enrolling in classes are graphically displayed in Figure 3.

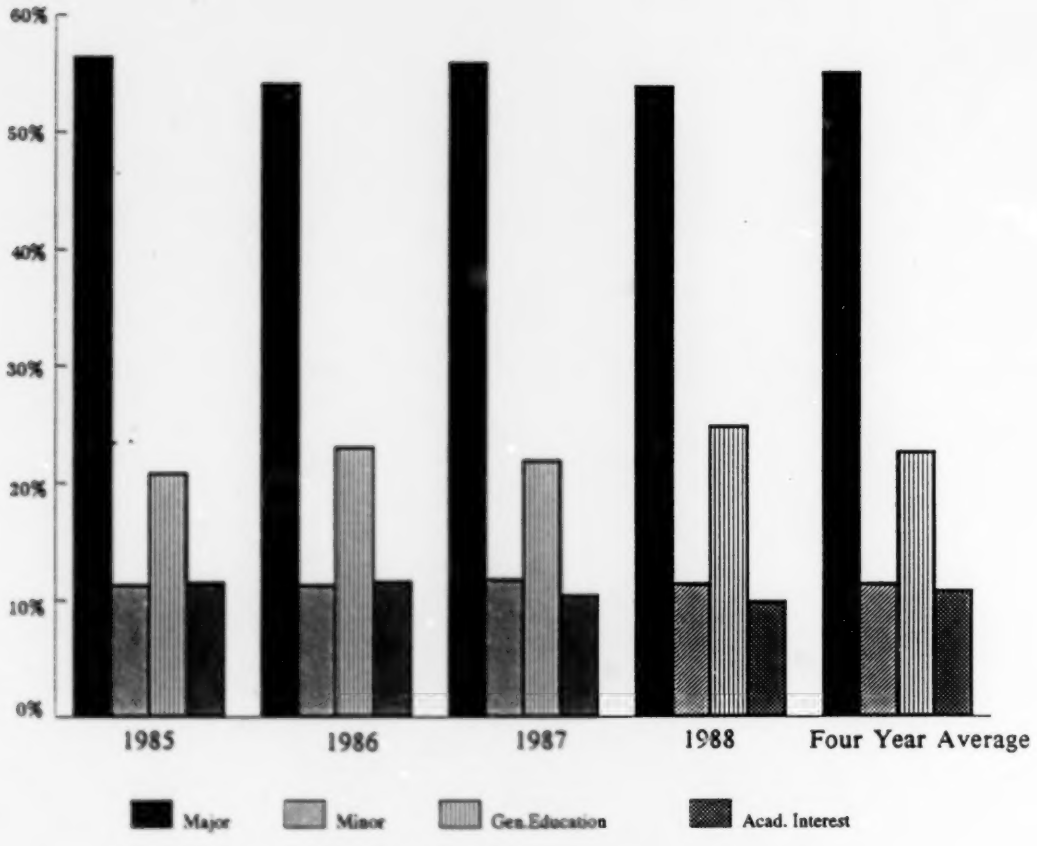

Figure 3: Distribution of student evaluations by *reason for taking class*: 1985-1988

Professor's rank. Over the past four years, the percentage of students enrolled in classes taught by full professors has ranged between 41 and 46 percent. In 1988, the percentage of students taught by associate professors (17.1%) was somewhat lower than in previous years. On the other hand, the proportion taught by assistant professors was higher (18.6%). Lecturers have taught approximately 21% of the students enrolled in fall classes each year since 1985. These figures are graphically displayed in Figure 4.

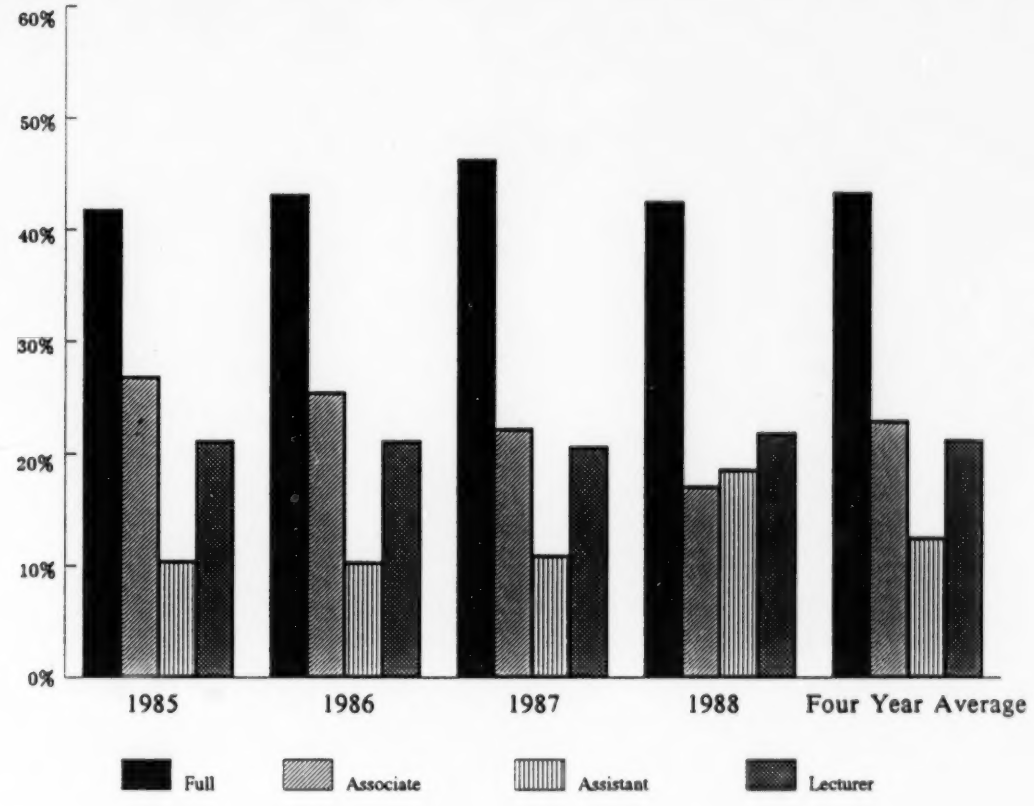

Figure 4: Distribution of student evaluations by *professor's rank*: 1985-1988

The second step of the analysis was to obtain the frequency distribution of student responses to each of the three educational quality measures (i.e., Professor Skill, Course Quality, TA Skill) and the two course and professor recommendation questions broken down by course type, class size, reason for taking course, and the professor's rank. For the educational quality measures, results are reported according to the percentage of "agree"/ "strongly agree" responses averaged over four fall quarters. For the course and professor recommendation questions, results are reported according to the percentage of "yes" responses averaged over four years. Responses were averaged over four years to avoid idiosyncratic findings associated with a particular cohort group and to ensure generalizability of the findings.

Table 2

Measures of Educational Quality, Course and Professor Recommendations by Course Type, Class Size, Reason for Taking Course, and Professor Rank

	Prof Skill	Course Quality	TA Skill	Recommend Course	Recommend Professor
Course Type					
Hum/Fine Arts	92.0%	84.0%	76.5%	90.1%	87.6%
Social Sciences	89.1	76.4	58.8	85.1	83.4
Math/Science	86.1	73.1	63.5	85.0	78.9
Engineering	81.6	68.6	49.1	82.7	74.0
Class Size					
≤ 20	96.8%	85.2%	76.4%	91.2%	93.0%
21-50	92.9	83.4	63.4	90.3	88.5
51-100	90.6	78.1	61.9	86.3	84.8
101-200	84.2	73.5	60.5	83.6	77.6
201-300	85.2	72.9	66.0	84.6	77.4
> 300	89.7	76.2	68.4	87.6	84.7
Reason					
Major/Minor	87.7%	75.7%	59.4%	86.1%	81.4%
Gen. Education	86.1	74.0	69.3	81.9	79.0
Interest	93.5	82.5	67.7	91.9	89.7
Professor's Rank					
Full	87.3%	74.1%	63.3%	84.3%	80.2%
Associate	89.0	77.4	65.6	86.4	83.4
Assistant	88.7	77.7	57.8	86.1	83.4
Lecturer	91.0	78.8	64.0	90.3	87.7
Average	88.0%	76.0%	63.2%	86.1%	81.9%

Professor Skill

The vast majority of students favorably rate the quality of instruction at UCSD; an impressive 88% agree with statements such as "Instructor displays proficient command of the material". As shown on Table 2, Professor Skill ratings vary as a function of course type, class size, reason for taking the course, and professor's rank.

An examination of the Professor Skill by course type data shows that of the students enrolled in humanities/fine arts classes, 92% favorably rate the skill of their professors. In social science classes, the Professor Skill rating is 89.1% while in science/math and engineering classes, skill ratings are somewhat lower at 86.1% and 81.6%, respectively. Interestingly, the relationship between class size and ratings of professor skill is curvilinear. As might be expected, small classes receive high ratings. However, skill ratings decrease with increasing class size until the class size reaches 201 or more and then the rating increases again. With respect to students' reasons for taking a course, academic interest courses are much more likely to receive favorable Professor Skill ratings than general education courses

or courses within major or minor. As illustrated below, 93.5% of the students who are enrolled in special interest courses favorably rate the skill of their professors. The comparable figure for general education and major/minor classes are 86.1% and 87.7%, respectively. And finally, Professor Skill ratings vary according to the professor's position at the University. On average, associate and assistant professors are rated somewhat higher than full professors. Lecturers are given the highest overall skill rating (91.0%).

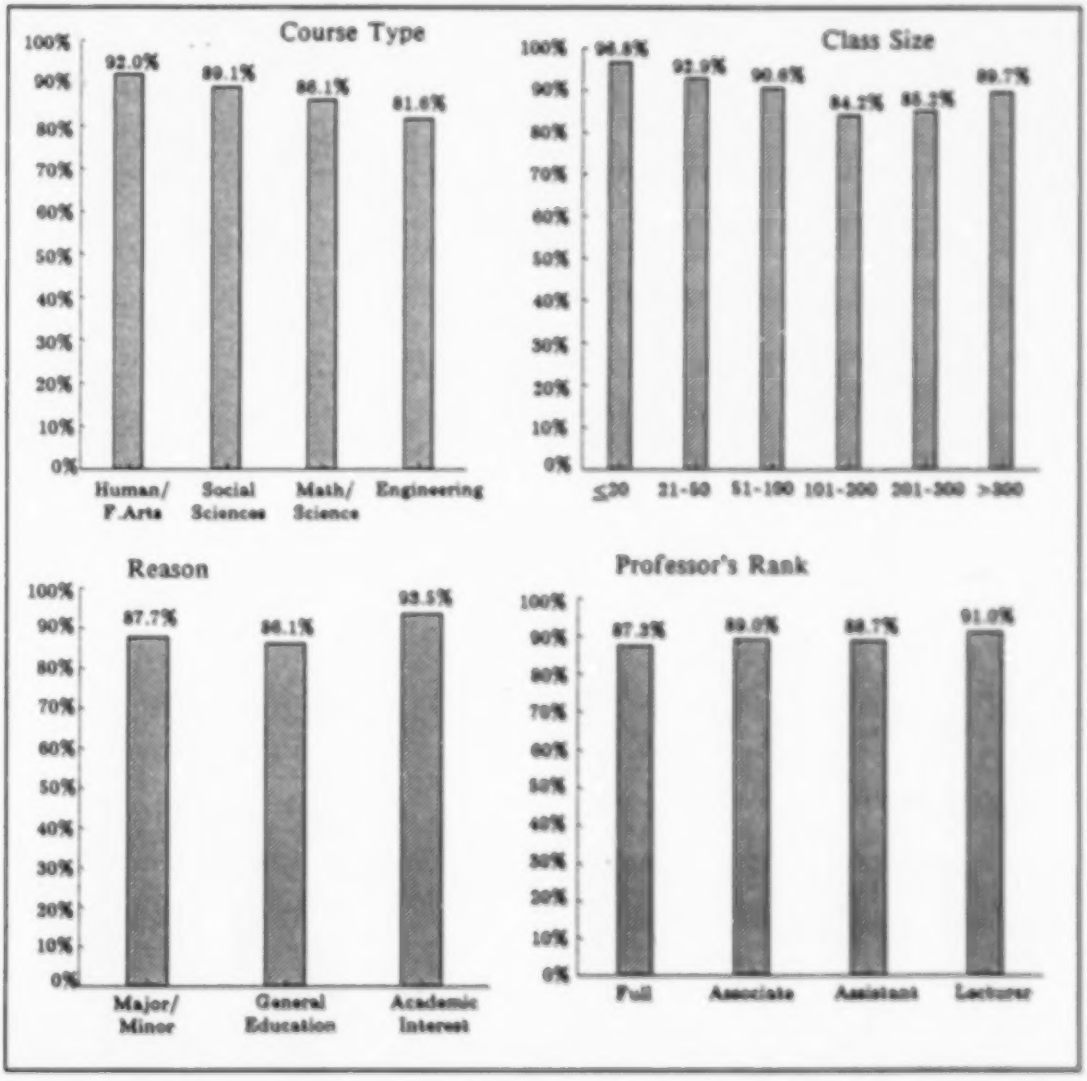

Figure 5. Professor Skill ratings by course type, class size, reason for taking course, and professor's rank.

Because Professor Skill ratings vary according to the instructor's position at the University, the data were examined to determine whether course type, class size, and reason for taking the course varied according to professor rank. An examination of the data in Table 3 shows that the relatively high rating for lecturers can be attributed to the fact that relative to full, associate, and assistant professors, lecturers are more likely to teach humanities/fine arts classes and less likely to teach engineering classes, more likely to teach small (<50) and very large classes (>300) and less likely to teach medium sized classes, and more likely to teach general interest classes and less likely to teach classes in major. Humanities/fine arts, small and large classes, and academic interest classes are associated with high Professor Skill ratings.

Table 3

Professor's Rank by Course Type, Class Size, and Reason for Taking Course

	Professor's Rank			
	Full	Associate	Assistant	Lecturer
Course Type				
Hum/Fine Arts	18.5%	31.4%	13.1%	37.9%
Social Sciences	26.9	43.9	47.1	27.5
Science/Math	44.6	17.6	15.8	28.6
Engineering	10.0	7.2	24.0	6.0
Class Size				
≤ 20	1.4%	3.1%	2.4%	4.6%
21-50	9.6	10.5	7.8	15.6
51-100	21.8	16.7	18.4	5.8
101-200	23.6	35.2	33.3	31.3
201-300	25.0	22.7	24.3	17.0
> 300	18.5	11.8	13.7	25.3
Reason for Taking Course				
Major/Minor	69.9%	67.8%	71.5%	54.8%
General Education	21.8	23.9	19.3	32.1
Academic Interest	8.2	8.3	9.2	13.1

Course Quality

Ratings of Course Quality are somewhat lower than ratings of Professor Skill. Nonetheless, over three-fourths (76.0%) of the students at UCSD positively rate the quality of their undergraduate courses (see Table 2). Course Quality and Professor Skill ratings are positively related ($r = .60$) indicating that students who rate their professor as being skillful tend to favorably evaluate the quality of the course. As in the case of Professor Skill ratings, Course Quality ratings vary as a function of course type, classroom size, reason for taking the course, and instructor's rank. See Figure 6.

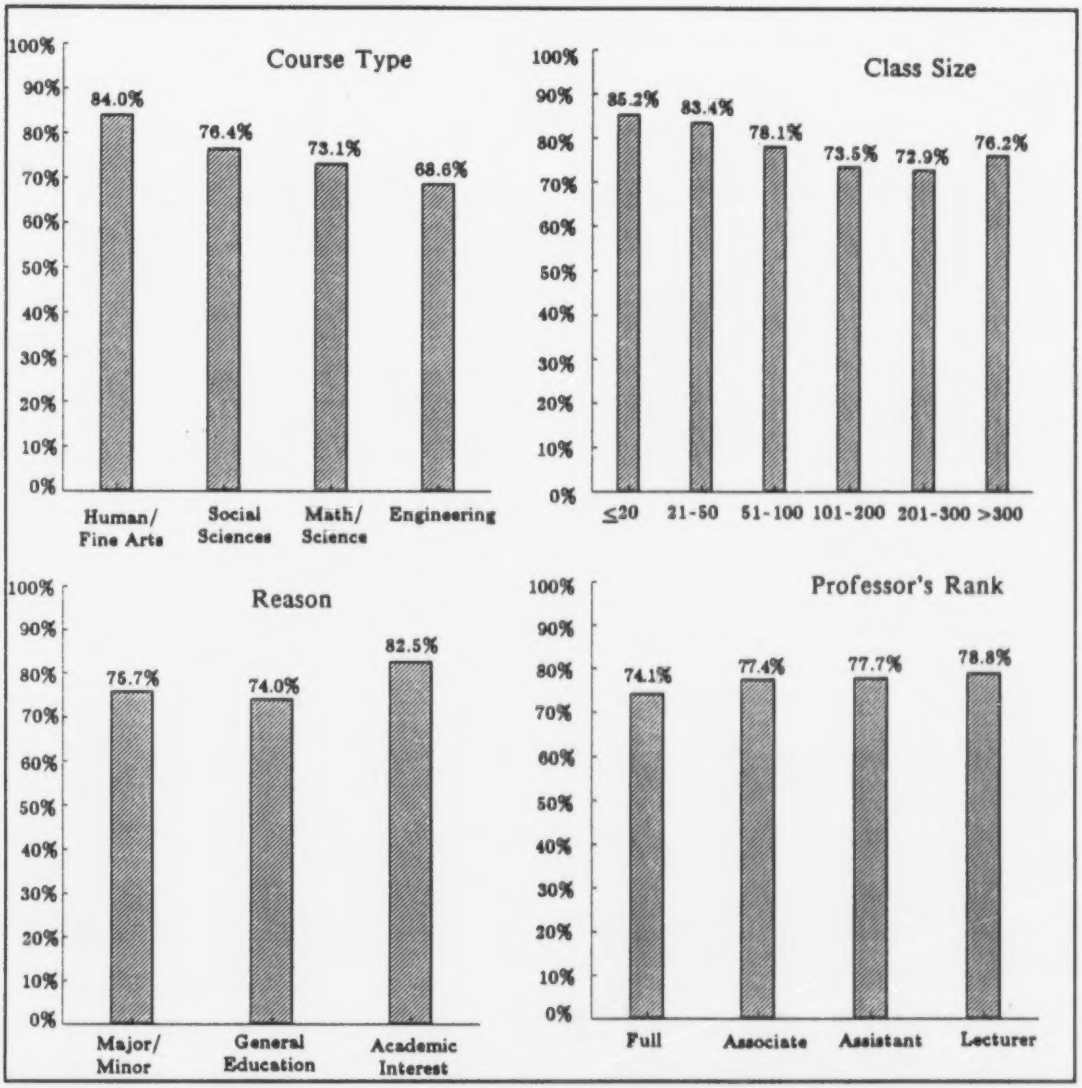

Figure 6. Course quality ratings by course type, class size, reason for taking class, and professor's rank

As illustrated in Figure 6, Course Quality ratings vary rather dramatically by disciplinary area with the highest rating occurring in humanities/fine arts courses (84.0%), and the lowest rating occurring in engineering courses (68.6%). Because it was believed that course ratings might be influenced by students' perceptions of course difficulty, Course Quality ratings were examined according to students' responses to the CAPE question "This course is difficult relative to other courses" (see CAPE questionnaire in Appendix A). Agree and strongly agree responses to this question were combined to form a difficulty rating.

Table 4

Course Difficulty Ratings by Course Type, Class Size, Reason for Taking Class, and Professor's Rank

	"This Course is Difficult Relative to Others"*	
	Disagree/ Strongly Disagree	Agree/ Strongly Agree
Course Type		
Hum/Arts	38.6%	38.0%
Social Sciences	33.4	41.5
Science/Math	19.7	61.9
Engineering	22.0	58.6
Class Size		
≤ 20	27.9%	48.0%
21-50	29.2	46.2
51-100	25.7	52.9
101-200	27.4	51.1
201-300	29.7	47.7
> 300	35.0	45.0
Reason for Taking Class		
Major/Minor	25.1%	54.0%
General Education	34.3	42.3
Academic Interest	41.8	34.3
Professor's Rank		
Full	25.5%	53.4%
Associate	27.8	49.5
Assistant	28.8	49.3
Lecturer	34.7	43.9

**Neutral responses were not included in the analysis.*

Relative to others classes, undergraduate math and science courses are rated as being the most difficult with 61.9% of the respondents agreeing with the statement "This course is difficult relative to others". Engineering courses are also rated as being difficult relative to other courses. Note that difficulty ratings vary according to class size, reason for taking the class and professor's rank. Most noticeably, major/minor classes and classes taught by full professors are rated as being the most difficult while academic interest courses and courses taught by lecturers are rated as being the least difficult. The relative low Professor Skill rating for full professors discussed earlier is undoubtedly influenced by the fact that full professors are more likely to be associated with "difficult" classes.

TA Skill

As at other large research universities, graduate teaching assistants play an important role in the delivery of the academic program of instruction at UCSD. In recognition of this role, the CAPE questionnaire includes several TA evaluation items (e.g., "In general,

TA(s) explain material in a manner that promotes learning"). An examination of the TA Skill ratings appearing on Table 2 reveals that in comparison to Professor Skill and Course Quality ratings, TA Skill ratings are substantially lower; 63.2% versus 88.0% and 76.0%, respectively. Interestingly, TA Skill ratings do not follow the same pattern of variation as observed in Professor Skill and Course Quality ratings. For example, although TA Skill ratings are relatively low in engineering courses (similar to ratings of Professor Skill and Course Quality), they are also relatively low in social science courses (unlike Professor Skill and Course Quality findings). Additionally, the highest TA rating occurs in general education courses, not special interest courses as in the case of Professor Skill and Course Quality. The relationship of the study variables to ratings of TA Skill are graphically displayed in Figure 7.

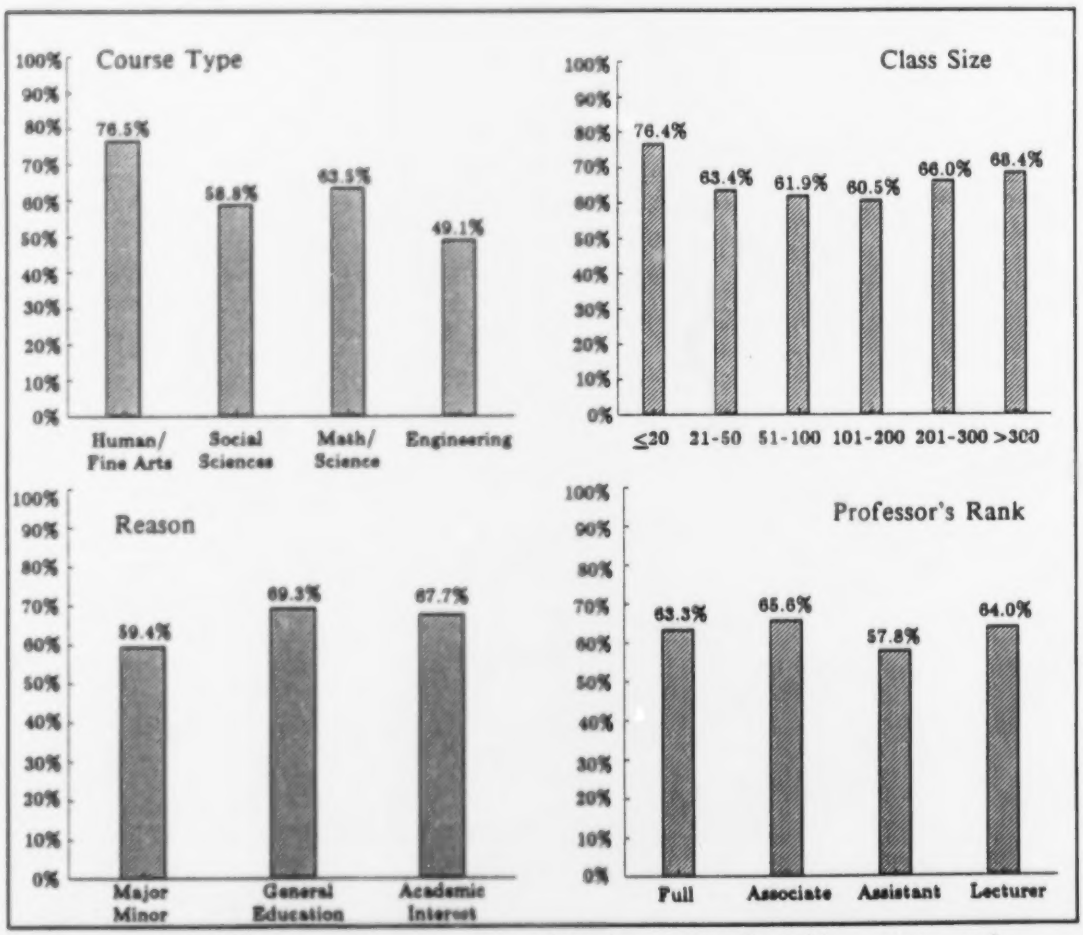

Figure 7. TA skill ratings by course type, class size, reason for taking course, and professor's rank

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Professor and Course Recommendations

On the question *"Would you recommend this course overall?"*, an impressive 86.1% of the student respondents averaged over four years said "Yes". On the question *"Would you recommend this instructor for this course?"*, 81.9% said "Yes" (see Table 2). These findings indicate that both the courses and the instructors at UCSD are very well received by the majority of students. Correlational analysis performed on the data indicate that course and instructor recommendations are moderately correlated (r = .40) indicating that students who respond affirmatively to one question tend to respond affirmatively to the other.

Not surprisingly course and instructor recommendations vary according to course type, class size, reason for taking the course and the professor's rank. Course recommendations by course area range from a high of 90.1% in humanities/fine arts courses to a low of 82.7% in engineering courses. The variation in professor recommendation by course area is noticeable with recommendations ranging from a high of 87.6% in humanities/fine arts to a low of 74.0% in engineering (see Figure 1).

Professor and course recommendations by class size, reason for taking course, and professor's rank are graphically displayed in Figures 9, 10, and 11, respectively.

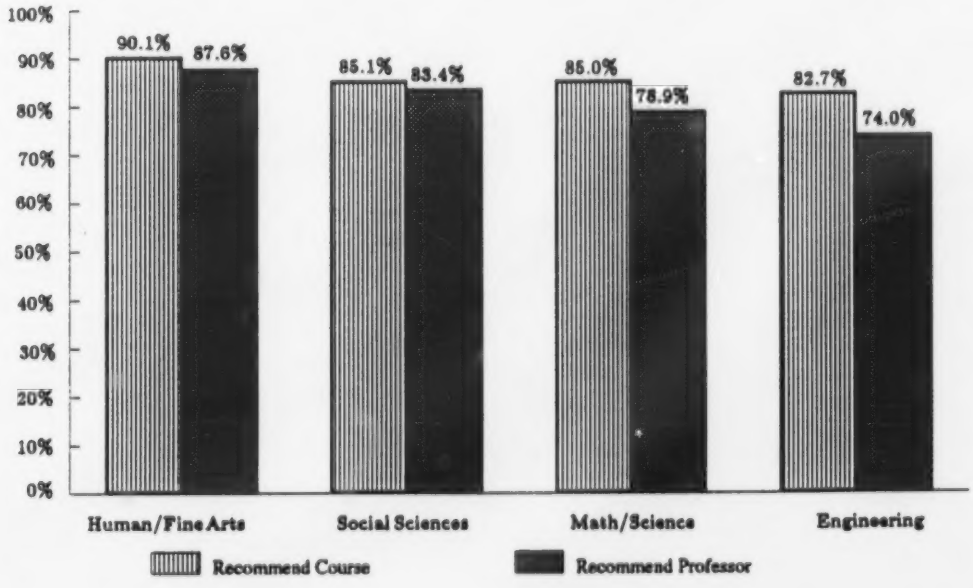

Figure 8. Course and professor recommendations by course type.

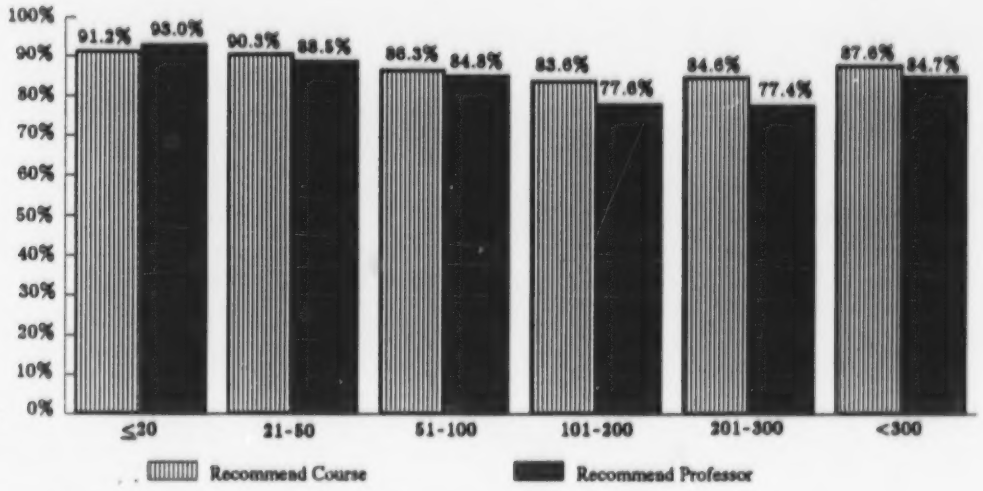

Figure 9. Course and professor recommendations by class size.

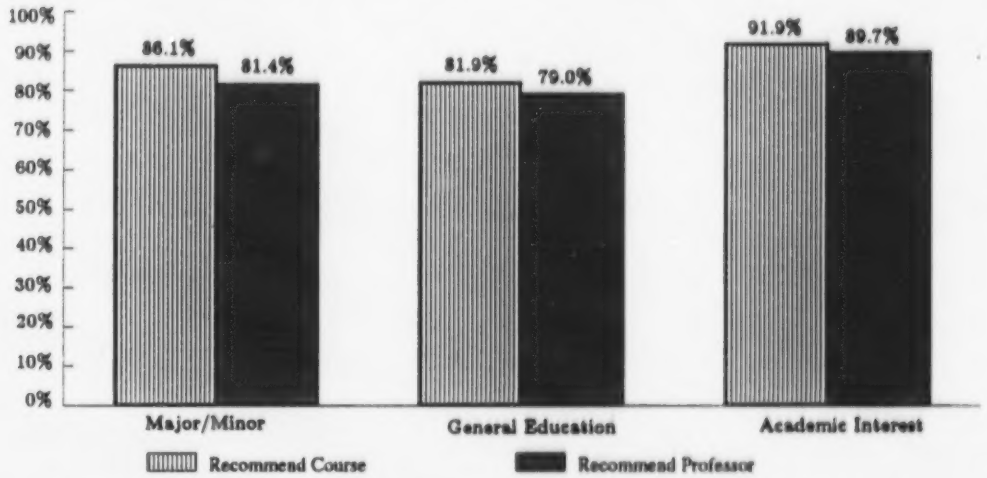

Figure 10. Course and professor recommendations by reason for taking class.

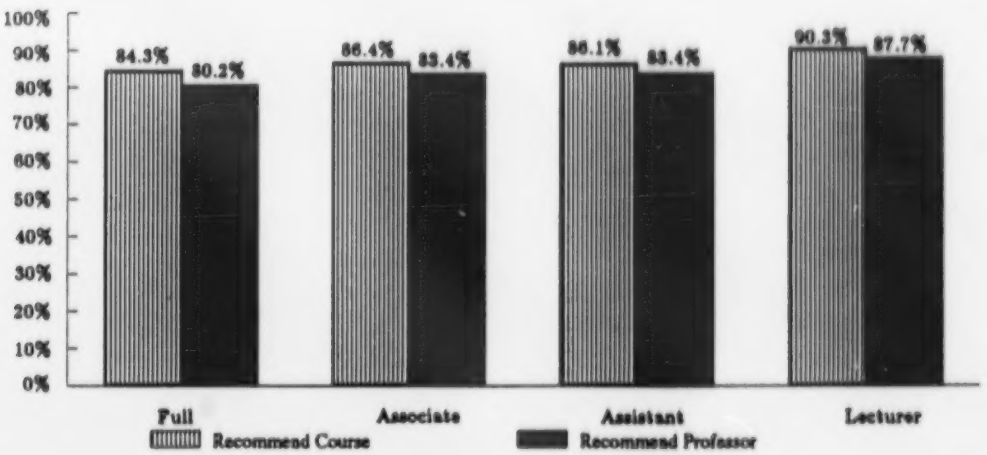

Figure 11. Course and professor recommendations by professor's rank.

Summary of Findings

The relationship between student evaluations of instructional quality and the background characteristics examined in the current study are summarized in Table 5.

Table 5

Overview of the Relations Found between Students' Evaluations of Instructional Quality and Specific Background Characteristics

Background Characteristics	Summary of Findings
Academic course type	Tendency for higher ratings in humanities/fine arts and lower ratings in the physical sciences.
Class size	Small classes (<50) and very large classes (>300) tend to be rated more favorably than medium sized classes.
Reasons for taking class	Special interest classes receive higher ratings than general education classes or major/minor classes.
Instructor rank	In general, associate and assistant professors are rated somewhat more favorably than full professors. Lecturers receive the highest ratings. Tendency for lecturers to teach special interest classes and full professors to teach "difficult" classes.

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

The overwhelming majority of students at UCSD favorably evaluate the quality of their undergraduate education. On measures of course quality and professor skill, three-fourths (76.0%) to four-fifths (88.0%) of all student assessments, averaged over four years,

are positive. Relative to professor and course assessments, TA assessments are somewhat lower. Nonetheless, nearly two-thirds (63.2%) of all students favorably rate their teaching assistant. This figure is encouraging given that the undergraduate classroom is the training ground for the faculty of the future.

The current study demonstrated that student evaluations of educational quality vary with institutional characteristics such as course type, class size, and professor rank. For example, evaluations are generally lower in engineering and science/math courses than in humanities/fine arts or social science courses. Ratings are also influenced by whether the class is a general education, major/minor, or a special interest class. Not surprisingly, higher ratings are associated with special interest classes than with required classes. Instructional quality ratings also tend to be higher for lecturers than full professors. A partial explanation for this phenomenon is that compared to their more experienced counterparts, lecturers are more likely to be associated with special interest classes, arts/humanities classes, and very small and very large classes (all factors shown to attract high ratings). On the other hand, full professors are more likely than lecturers to be associated with ratings of "difficulty".

An interesting finding in the current study is the relationship between class size and ratings of instructional quality. Although higher ratings in very small classrooms were to be expected, higher ratings for very large classes were not. The unexpectedly higher ratings for very large classes could be due to: (a) the selection of particularly effective instructors with demonstrated success in such settings; (b) students systematically selecting classes taught by particularly effective instructors, thereby increasing class size; (c) an increased motivation for instructors to do well when teaching particularly large classes; or (d) the development of "large class" techniques instead of trying to use inappropriate "small class" techniques that may produce lower ratings in moderately large classes. Clearly this is an area that warrants further research.

Another area that warrants research attention is the possible relationship between the background characteristics of the student evaluators and ratings of instructional quality. It is reasonable to assume that student characteristics, as well as institutional characteristics

such as class type and size are related to evaluations of instructional quality. That is, various subgroups of students (e.g., male, female, Asian, Hispanics) within the same class may view teaching effectiveness differently, and may be differently affected by the instruction they receive. To investigate this possibility, it is recommended that gender and ethnicity items be added to the course and professor evaluation form. The benefit of such a move is apparent given shifts in the demographic characteristics of students entering the higher educational pipeline.

Finally. It has been argued that students, as consumers, are in the best position to evaluate the quality of the educational product (Marsh, 1984). At UCSD student evaluations of educational quality are gratifyingly high. Over 80% of all students recommend their professor and course offerings to fellow "consumers". It seems safe to conclude, therefore, that teaching is a highly valued "byproduct" of the university faculty at UCSD.

References

Marsh, H. W. (1984). Students' evaluations of university teaching: Dimensionality, reliability, validty, potential biases, and utility. Journal of Educational Psychology, 76, 707-754.

Rodin, M. & Rodin, B. (1972). Student evaluations of teachers. Science, 177, 1164-1166.

APPENDIX A

Warren Campus
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CAPE

Course and Professor Evaluations

A student-run organization.
We appreciate your thoughtful input
and welcome detailed comments.

Course_____ Quarter, Year_____

Principal Instructor_____

	freshman	sophomore	junior	senior	graduate	extension
Your class level is	1	2	3	4	5	6

			major	minor	gen ed	interest
Your reason for taking this class is			3	4	5	6

Instructor:

	strongly disagree	disagree	no opinion	agree	strongly agree	not applicable
1. Instructor displays proficient command of the material	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. Instructor is well-prepared for classes	1	2	3	4	5	6
3. Instructor is accessible outside of class	1	2	3	4	5	6
4. Instructor shows concern for students' learning	1	2	3	4	5	6
5. Instructor promotes questions/discussion	1	2	3	4	5	6
6. Instructor's speech is clear and audible	1	2	3	4	5	6
7. Instructor explains course material in a manner that promotes learning	1	2	3	4	5	6
8. Instructor's lecture style facilitates note-taking	1	2	3	4	5	6

Course:

9. Course material is intellectually stimulating	1	2	3	4	5	6
10. The assignments promote learning	1	2	3	4	5	6
11. Required reading is useful	1	2	3	4	5	6
12. Competent TA(s) were available for this course	1	2	3	4	5	6
13. In general, TA(s) explain material in a manner that promotes learning	1	2	3	4	5	6
14. In general, TA(s) encourage questions and/or discussions	1	2	3	4	5	6
15. This course is difficult relative to other courses	1	2	3	4	5	6
16. The system of evaluation seems fair	1	2	3	4	5	6

	0-3	4-6	7-9	10-12	13-15	16+
17. How many hours per week have you spent studying for this course?	1	2	3	4	5	6

	yes	no
18. Do you recommend this course overall?	5	6
19. Do you recommend this instructor for this course?	5	6

Please use the reverse side of this page for your additional comments.

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Please comment on the following:

Instructor_____:
(name)

Course:

TA_____:
(name)

Exams/Quizzes:

Readings (title(s) and comments):

Student Evaluations of Instructional Quality:
How Does UCSD Rate?
1990

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A study was conducted for the purpose of assessing the quality of undergraduate education at UCSD. It was argued that, as consumers of the instructional product, students are in the best position to evaluate the product being offered. "Quality" of undergraduate education was defined therefore in terms of students' responses to the Course and Professor Evaluation (CAPE) questionnaire. CAPE data from 1985 to 1988 were subjected to statistical analysis to determine whether assessments of instructional quality varied as a function of a) the type of course in which the student was enrolled, b) the size of the class, c) the professor's rank or d) the student's reason for taking the course. The results of the analysis show that the vast majority of undergraduates favorably rate the quality of the academic instruction at UCSD; specifically,

- Eighty-eight percent of the students at UCSD favorably rate the teaching ability of their instructors.
- Over three-fourths (76%) of all undergraduates favorably rate the quality of the course offerings at UCSD.
- Eighty-two percent of all students, averaged over four years, recommend the faculty to fellow "consumers"; 86% recommend the courses.
- Instructional quality and course quality ratings tend to be higher in small classes and very large classes (>300) than in medium sized classes.
- Lecturers, in general, are more favorably evaluated than full, associate or assistant professors.
- In general, humanities/fine arts classes are evaluated more favorably than science/math or engineering classes.